on the throne. Before long she deposed this next *roi faineant* and openly assumed control of the government. She officiated at the imperial sacrifices, changed the dynastic name to Chou, and ruthlessly exiled or executed such members of the imperial family and their supporters as dared oppose her. She had her favorites, a Buddhist monk and later two handsome brothers, and scandalous stories were inevitably whispered about her relations with them. WKatever her private life may have been, she proved a competent and energetic monarch. She at least partly reestablished the prestige of the Empire abroad (the Tarim basin, for example, was recovered in 692), and at home governed with an iron hand. She showed Buddhism great favor and it was probably under her that Buddhist sculpture reached the height of its beauty and artistic and religious inspiration. In Chinese political history only two women rank with her, the Empress Lii of the Han and the Empress Dowager Tz'ii Hsi of the Ch'ing (Manchu) dynasty. All three had much in common, especially in masterfulness. At length, in 70S, when Wu Hou was about eighty years of age, and ill, a successful conspiracy deposed her and restored the first of the puppet Emperors whom she had dethroned.

This spineless creature continued to be a figurehead. He was dominated by his wife, a woman who had none of the ability of the great Wu Hou but was vicious enough and before many years had her husband poisoned. An insurrection soon made way with her and placed on the throne the second of the shadow Emperors whom Wu Hou had set up. After about two years he abdicated in favor of his third son, Li Lung-chi, who is best known as Hsiian Tsung or Ming Huang.

THE T'ANG REACHES ITS HEIGHT: HSUAN TSUNG (MING HUANG)

Hsiian Tsung held the throne from 712 until 756, the longest reign of the dynasty. He began with great promise. It was largely because of his initiative that his father had been restored to the throne and he was successful in crushing court intrigues which threatened him. Under him the T'ang reached the pinnacle of its glory. Chinese authority again expanded in the West. The power of one of the most notable Turkish enemies of the Chinese collapsed and two Turkish peoples allied with the Chinese (one